

CENTER FOR DISABILITY ACCESS
Amanda Seabock, Esq., SBN 289900
Prathima Price, Esq., SBN 321378
Dennis Price, Esq., SBN 279082
Mail: 8033 Linda Vista Road, Suite 200
San Diego, CA 92111
(858) 375-7385; (888) 422-5191 fax
amandas@potterhandy.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Scott Johnson

Plaintiff,

V.

GAWFCO Enterprises, Incorporated, a California Corporation

Defendant.

Case No.

Complaint For Damages And Injunctive Relief For Violations Of: Americans With Disabilities Act; Unruh Civil Rights Act

Plaintiff Scott Johnson complains of GAWFCO Enterprises, Incorporated, a California Corporation, and alleges as follows:

PARTIES:

1. Plaintiff is a California resident with physical disabilities. Plaintiff is a level C-5 quadriplegic. He cannot walk and also has significant manual dexterity impairments. He uses a wheelchair for mobility and has a specially equipped van.

2. Defendant GAWFCO Enterprises, Incorporated owned Stevenson Fuel and Food located at or about 5505 Stevenson Blvd, Fremont, California, in August 2020.

1 3. Defendant GAWFCO Enterprises, Incorporated owns Stevenson Fuel
2 and Food (“Gas Station”) located at or about 5505 Stevenson Blvd, Fremont,
3 California, currently.

4 4. Plaintiff does not know the true names of Defendants, their business
5 capacities, their ownership connection to the property and business, or their
6 relative responsibilities in causing the access violations herein complained of,
7 and alleges a joint venture and common enterprise by all such Defendants.
8 Plaintiff is informed and believes that each of the Defendants herein is
9 responsible in some capacity for the events herein alleged, or is a necessary
10 party for obtaining appropriate relief. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend when
11 the true names, capacities, connections, and responsibilities of the Defendants
12 are ascertained.

13

14 **JURISDICTION & VENUE:**

15 5. The Court has subject matter jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28
16 U.S.C. § 1331 and § 1343(a)(3) & (a)(4) for violations of the Americans with
17 Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.

18 6. Pursuant to supplemental jurisdiction, an attendant and related cause
19 of action, arising from the same nucleus of operative facts and arising out of
20 the same transactions, is also brought under California’s Unruh Civil Rights
21 Act, which act expressly incorporates the Americans with Disabilities Act.

22 7. Venue is proper in this court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331(b) and is
23 founded on the fact that the real property which is the subject of this action is
24 located in this district and that Plaintiff's cause of action arose in this district.

25

26 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS:**

27 8. Plaintiff went to the Gas Station in August 2020 (twice) with the
28 intention to avail himself of its goods or services motivated in part to

1 determine if the defendants comply with the disability access laws.

2 9. The Gas Station is a facility open to the public, a place of public
3 accommodation, and a business establishment.

4 10. Unfortunately, on the dates of the plaintiff's visits, the defendants failed
5 to provide wheelchair accessible parking in conformance with the ADA
6 Standards as it relates to wheelchair users like the plaintiff.

7 11. The Gas Station provides parking to its customers but fails to provide
8 wheelchair accessible parking.

9 12. A problem that plaintiff encountered is that although there was a
10 parking stall marked and reserved for persons with disabilities, a black vehicle
11 with the same license plate number parked in the access aisle during both
12 visits. Plaintiff alleges that this vehicle, which does not have handicap plates or
13 a placard, belongs to someone affiliated with the Gas Station.

14 13. Plaintiff believes that there are other features of the parking that likely
15 fail to comply with the ADA Standards and seeks to have fully compliant
16 parking available for wheelchair users.

17 14. On information and belief the defendants currently fail to provide
18 wheelchair accessible parking.

19 15. These barriers relate to and impact the plaintiff's disability. Plaintiff
20 personally encountered these barriers.

21 16. As a wheelchair user, the plaintiff benefits from and is entitled to use
22 wheelchair accessible facilities. By failing to provide accessible facilities, the
23 defendants denied the plaintiff full and equal access.

24 17. The failure to provide accessible facilities created difficulty and
25 discomfort for the Plaintiff.

26 18. The defendants have failed to maintain in working and useable
27 conditions those features required to provide ready access to persons with
28 disabilities.

1 19. The barriers identified above are easily removed without much
 2 difficulty or expense. They are the types of barriers identified by the
 3 Department of Justice as presumably readily achievable to remove and, in fact,
 4 these barriers are readily achievable to remove. Moreover, there are numerous
 5 alternative accommodations that could be made to provide a greater level of
 6 access if complete removal were not achievable.

7 20. Plaintiff will return to the Gas Station to avail himself of its goods or
 8 services and to determine compliance with the disability access laws once it is
 9 represented to him that the Gas Station and its facilities are accessible.
 10 Plaintiff is currently deterred from doing so because of his knowledge of the
 11 existing barriers and his uncertainty about the existence of yet other barriers
 12 on the site. If the barriers are not removed, the plaintiff will face unlawful and
 13 discriminatory barriers again.

14 21. Given the obvious and blatant nature of the barriers and violations
 15 alleged herein, the plaintiff alleges, on information and belief, that there are
 16 other violations and barriers on the site that relate to his disability. Plaintiff will
 17 amend the complaint, to provide proper notice regarding the scope of this
 18 lawsuit, once he conducts a site inspection. However, please be on notice that
 19 the plaintiff seeks to have all barriers related to his disability remedied. See
 20 *Doran v. 7-11*, 524 F.3d 1034 (9th Cir. 2008) (holding that once a plaintiff
 21 encounters one barrier at a site, he can sue to have all barriers that relate to his
 22 disability removed regardless of whether he personally encountered them).

23

**24 I. FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION: VIOLATION OF THE AMERICANS
 25 WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990 (On behalf of Plaintiff and against all
 26 Defendants.) (42 U.S.C. section 12101, et seq.)**

27 22. Plaintiff re-pleads and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth
 28 again herein, the allegations contained in all prior paragraphs of this

1 complaint.

2 23. Under the ADA, it is an act of discrimination to fail to ensure that the
3 privileges, advantages, accommodations, facilities, goods and services of any
4 place of public accommodation is offered on a full and equal basis by anyone
5 who owns, leases, or operates a place of public accommodation. See 42 U.S.C.
6 § 12182(a). Discrimination is defined, *inter alia*, as follows:

- 7 a. A failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices,
8 or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford
9 goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or
10 accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the
11 accommodation would work a fundamental alteration of those
12 services and facilities. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii).
- 13 b. A failure to remove architectural barriers where such removal is
14 readily achievable. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv). Barriers are
15 defined by reference to the ADA Standards.
- 16 c. A failure to make alterations in such a manner that, to the
17 maximum extent feasible, the altered portions of the facility are
18 readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities,
19 including individuals who use wheelchairs or to ensure that, to the
20 maximum extent feasible, the path of travel to the altered area and
21 the bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving the
22 altered area, are readily accessible to and usable by individuals
23 with disabilities. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2).

24 24. When a business provides parking for its customers, it must provide
25 accessible parking.

26 25. Here, accessible parking has not been provided in conformance with the
27 ADA Standards.

28 26. The Safe Harbor provisions of the 2010 Standards are not applicable

1 here because the conditions challenged in this lawsuit do not comply with the
2 1991 Standards.

3 27. A public accommodation must maintain in operable working condition
4 those features of its facilities and equipment that are required to be readily
5 accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. 28 C.F.R. § 36.211(a).

6 28. Here, the failure to ensure that the accessible facilities were available
7 and ready to be used by the plaintiff is a violation of the law.

8

9 **II. SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION: VIOLATION OF THE UNRUH CIVIL**
10 **RIGHTS ACT** (On behalf of Plaintiff and against all Defendants.) (Cal. Civ.
11 Code § 51-53.)

12 29. Plaintiff repleads and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth
13 again herein, the allegations contained in all prior paragraphs of this
14 complaint. The Unruh Civil Rights Act (“Unruh Act”) guarantees, *inter alia*,
15 that persons with disabilities are entitled to full and equal accommodations,
16 advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishment of
17 every kind whatsoever within the jurisdiction of the State of California. Cal.
18 Civ. Code § 51(b).

19 30. The Unruh Act provides that a violation of the ADA is a violation of the
20 Unruh Act. Cal. Civ. Code, § 51(f).

21 31. Defendants’ acts and omissions, as herein alleged, have violated the
22 Unruh Act by, *inter alia*, denying, or aiding, or inciting the denial of, Plaintiff’s
23 rights to full and equal use of the accommodations, advantages, facilities,
24 privileges, or services offered.

25 32. Because the violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act resulted in difficulty,
26 discomfort or embarrassment for the plaintiff, the defendants are also each
27 responsible for statutory damages, i.e., a civil penalty. (Civ. Code § 55.56(a)-
28 (c).)

1 33. Although the plaintiff encountered frustration and difficulty by facing
2 discriminatory barriers, even manifesting itself with minor and fleeting
3 physical symptoms, the plaintiff does not value this very modest physical
4 personal injury greater than the amount of the statutory damages.

5

6 **PRAYER:**

7 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays that this Court award damages and provide
8 relief as follows:

9 1. For injunctive relief, compelling Defendants to comply with the
10 Americans with Disabilities Act and the Unruh Civil Rights Act. Note: the
11 plaintiff is not invoking section 55 of the California Civil Code and is not
12 seeking injunctive relief under the Disabled Persons Act at all.

13 2. Damages under the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which provides for actual
14 damages and a statutory minimum of \$4,000 for each offense.

15 3. Reasonable attorney fees, litigation expenses and costs of suit, pursuant
16 to 42 U.S.C. § 12205; and Cal. Civ. Code §§ 52.

17

18 Dated: January 5, 2021

19 CENTER FOR DISABILITY ACCESS

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23 By: _____

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